

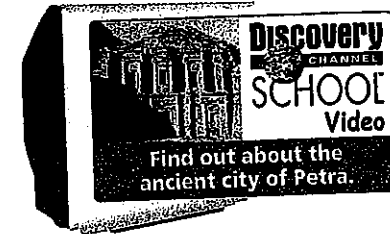
The First Cities

farming succeeded in Mesopotamia, communities began to build up surpluses of food. In time, food surpluses encouraged the growth of cities. By 3500 B.C., some of the earliest known cities arose in the southern region of Sumer, along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Independent Cities Form Although cities in Mesopotamia shared a common culture and language, they did not unite under a single ruler. Instead, they remained politically independent city-states. A city-state is a city that is also a separate, independent state. Each Sumerian city acted as a separate state, with its own special god or goddess, its own government, and, eventually, its own king.

A Brief Tour of a Sumerian City Public squares bustled with activity. In the marketplaces, merchants displayed goods in outdoor stalls. Musicians, acrobats, beggars, and water sellers filled the streets. For a fee, scribes wrote letters for those who could not read or write. Sumerian houses faced away from the crowded streets, onto inner courtyards where families ate and children played. On hot nights, people slept outdoors on their homes' flat roofs. Oil lamps supplied light for Sumerian homes.

✓ Reading Check How were the cities of Sumer governed?



Rereading

Reread the paragraph at left. In what ways did Sumerian cities act as states?

